

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2013 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**  
**A Public School - 13OH11**

	<b>Charter</b>	<b>Title 1</b>	<b>Magnet</b>	<b>Choice</b>
School Type (Public Schools):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Principal: Mrs. Cari Mineard

Official School Name: Orchard Middle School

School Mailing Address: 6800 S.O.M. Center Road  
Solon, OH 44139-4133

County: Cuyahoga State School Code Number\*: 064162

Telephone: (440) 349-6218 E-mail: cmineard@solonboe.org

Fax: (440) 349-8054 Web site/URL: www.solonschools.org/orchard

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that all information is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*: Mr. Joseph Regano Superintendent e-mail: jregano@solonboe.org

District Name: Solon City School District District Phone: (440) 248-1600

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mrs. Julie Glavin

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

*\*Non-Public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools (Aba.Kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

## **PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or its equivalent each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's AYP requirement or its equivalent in the 2012-2013 school year. Meeting AYP or its equivalent must be certified by the state. Any AYP status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2007 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for that period.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2012.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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All data are the most recent year available.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district    4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)  
  2 Middle/Junior high schools  
  1 High schools  
  0 K-12 schools  
  7 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure:    13216

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:    Suburban
4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school:    1
5. Number of students as of October 1, 2012 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	199	167	366
6	208	183	391
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12	0	0	0
Total in Applying School:			757

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native  
14 % Asian  
15 % Black or African American  
3 % Hispanic or Latino  
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
64 % White  
4 % Two or more races  
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2011-2012 school year: 4%  
This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Step	Description	Value
(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	15
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	17
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	32
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2011	757
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.04
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	4

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 2%  
Total number of ELL students in the school: 17  
Number of non-English languages represented: 5  
Specify non-English languages:

Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Korean and Arabic

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11%

Total number of students who qualify: 87

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 9%

Total number of students served: 68

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>13</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>15</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>32</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	<u><b>Full-Time</b></u>	<u><b>Part-Time</b></u>
Administrator(s)	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>30</u>	<u>0</u>
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	<u>25</u>	<u>1</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	<u>5</u>	<u>14</u>
Total number	<u>68</u>	<u>15</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1: 25:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	%	%	%	%	%

14. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools):**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2012.

Graduating class size: \_\_\_\_\_

Enrolled in a 4-year college or university \_\_\_\_\_%

Enrolled in a community college \_\_\_\_\_%

Enrolled in vocational training \_\_\_\_\_%

Found employment \_\_\_\_\_%

Military service \_\_\_\_\_%

Other \_\_\_\_\_%

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_**0%**

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award:

☒ No

☐ Yes

If yes, what was the year of the award?

## PART III - SUMMARY

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Orchard Middle School is home to all fifth and sixth grade students in the Solon City School district, located in Solon, Ohio, about 30 miles southeast of Cleveland. Solon is one of Northeast Ohio's most diverse communities, providing a rich environment of cultural, religious, racial and socio-economic diversity that reflects the larger global community.

Solon City Schools' mission, created by our district Strategic Planning Team of community members, parents, administrators and teachers, states: "By inspiring students to achieve their personal best, the Solon City Schools will ensure all students attain the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed and become contributing, ethical citizens through a collaborative learning community working in partnership with families and our diverse community." This mission is built on the belief that all students can and will learn. It is also a commitment to the concept that all students will achieve the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the standards set forth by the state and that the district will do everything possible to help all students reach their potential.

Our Orchard Middle School vision is derived from this lofty district mission. Our vision is to become a highly effective professional learning community in which all students and all staff members actively engage in learning and continuously seek ways to improve and further their learning. We also strive to provide a safe, secure environment in which all stakeholders (staff, students, parents, and community members) value education and work together to achieve high results and make significant gains in student achievement.

To ensure that each student achieves at high levels, Solon teachers use a structure known as the Professional Learning Community, which requires collaboratively developed and widely shared mission, vision, values and goals. This structure promotes shared responsibility and accountability. Teachers no longer work in isolation. Using their own professional expertise, they are purposefully and actively engaged in collaborative and reflective dialogue with other colleagues to determine best practices designed to ensure that all students learn.

At Orchard Middle School, this systematic approach is embedded in the daily life of our school and has transformed our school. It has shifted our focus from teaching to learning. It has also shifted us from interdisciplinary teams that worked in isolation to grade-level collaborative teams of teachers that now meet weekly to plan instruction, develop common assessments, analyze student work, analyze assessment data and develop action plans to address weaknesses in student learning or teacher instruction. We support one another by sharing strategies and materials to improve student learning and to accomplish goals that would be impossible if we were working alone. To improve learning for all, we learn from each other and focus on results.

We focus daily on what we want students to learn, how we know they are learning, what we will do when we know they are not learning, and what we will do if they demonstrate that they have already learned the material. We collect and use data from assessments to inform our instructional decisions, and then strategically act on the data to achieve our results. Through professional learning communities, teachers and students are challenged to set and act upon S.M.A.R.T. goals. These goals drive our professional learning and results-oriented orientation. Education is our means and learning is our outcome. This is what sets us apart from other schools in the state of Ohio. This allows us to meet the needs of all of our students, regardless of ability, race, gender, or economic status.

As a result of our guaranteed, engaging and rigorous curriculum for all students and focused work on student achievement, we are extremely proud of our Orchard Middle School accomplishments. Based on our consistently high levels of academic achievement on Ohio Achievement Tests, we have received both

state and national recognition as a "Middle School to Watch" through the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades-Reform. Our school has also been recognized by the Ohio Department of Education as an Ohio School of Distinction for the exceptionally high performance of students with disabilities. Each year our students compete and place at various events at the state and international levels, including several first place finishes in chess, Future Problem Solvers, Science Olympiad, and the First Lego League.



## PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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### 1. Assessment Results:

Ohio uses standards-based achievement tests for grades three through eight in the areas of Reading, Science and Math. As a condition for graduation, the Ohio Graduation Tests are administered to grade 10 students in the area of English writing, English reading, mathematics, social studies and science. The percentage of students in all of the Solon City Schools, including Orchard Middle School, that pass these tests, is reported to parents and the community in the form of the annual District Report Cards issued by the Ohio Department of Education and posted online at the ODE website.

Individual student scores reported directly to parents rank students according to their performance. In Ohio, students in grade 5 are assessed in reading, science and math while students in grade 6 are assessed in reading and math. Students are rated based on their performance level: Limited, Basic, Proficient, Accelerated and Advanced. Data is disaggregated to give more information regarding program success across all subcategories of children, including those with learning disabilities. More information about Ohio's assessment system is available at <http://www.ode.state.oh.us>.

A direct review of the data trends for achievement results over the past few years highlights how successful Orchard Middle School has been with carrying out the district mission of "every student, every day" by ensuring that all students are achieving at high levels. For individual school building report cards, the state of Ohio uses a performance index that measures student passage rates, but also assigns weighted scores according to the level of passage. Therefore, an "advanced" or "accelerated" score on the test is weighted higher than a "basic" passage score. The maximum performance index score is 120 if all students are scoring in the advanced range. Orchard Middle School's performance index score has consistently been high since it was first introduced as a measure of student achievement over time. In 2004-05, Orchard's performance index was 107. As the Orchard instructional team implemented strategic interventions for students, the school's performance index score rose to its highest level of 110.9 in 2011-12. This not only demonstrates that high numbers of Orchard Middle School students are meeting the standards, but that increasingly high numbers of students are scoring at the "accelerated" and "advanced" ranges on the state's achievement tests. Each year, teachers carefully analyze the assessment data, identify gaps and work to continue to improve instructional practices to improve student achievement.

Grade 5 reading assessment results for the 2011-12 school year show that 94% of Orchard students were proficient, with 53.5% of our students scoring in the advanced or accelerated levels. Historically, in 2007-08, 91% of our students were proficient and in 2008-09, 92% of our students were proficient. In 2009-10, we experienced a dip in student scores as 89% of our students were proficient. With those results in hand, the instructional team immediately analyzed all aspects of our instruction and revamped elements of our instruction to meet the needs of our most struggling students and ensure that these students received targeted instruction to help close their learning gaps. In addition, the instructional team implemented additional strategies and monitoring to be certain the needs of students at all levels are met and that they are all making progress. Those changes showed direct results as over the past three school years, reading scores for Orchard students in grade 5 have increased from 89% to 94%. Grade 6 reading achievement results for the 2011-12 school year showed that 100% of Orchard students were proficient, with 78% of students scoring in the accelerated or advanced ranges. Again looking at the scores historically, in 2007-08, 95% of Orchard students were proficient on the Grade 6 reading test. The scores rose to 96% in 2008-09 and to 99% in 2009-10. Scores dipped slightly in 2010-11, when 97% of our students were proficient or above. When these students were in grade 5, only 89% of the students scored proficient or above, so the instructional changes for these students showed results. Looking at the five years of results, at least 70% of Orchard students scored accelerated and above.

Math results for Orchard showed that in 2007-08, grade 5 passage rate was 86%. Subsequently, student scores increased to 87% proficient and above in 2009-10 and to 90% in 2009-10. In 2010-11, scores reversed back to 86% proficient and above. With this data in hand, the instructional team changed the master schedule and in the 2011-12 school year, students received an 80-minute math block each day. In addition, the instructional team ramped up the rigor of our math instruction and embedded concept spiral materials into each math unit. As a result, grade 5 math scores rose to 96% proficient and above in 2011-12 and 82% of students scored accelerated and above. Grade 6 math scores have been consistently over 95% proficient over the past five years. In 2007-08 and 2008-09, Orchard grade 6 students passed at a 95% passage rate and in 2009-10, student scores slightly increased to 98% proficient and above. Analyzing a decrease in grade 6 scores in 2010-11 to 95% passage, the instructional team implemented the same schedule changes for grade 6 to allow for more access to the math curriculum and increased rigor. Subsequently, grade 6 scores rose to 99% proficient and above in 2011-12. During the past five years, nearly 80% of grade 6 students scored at the accelerated and advanced ranges in math.

Passage rates for fifth and sixth grade Orchard students with disabilities dropped in math in 2010-11. As a result, the building instructional team, comprised of the administrators, school psychologist, curriculum leaders and guidance counselor, created and implemented a target action plan to address the achievement gap for those students. Students with disabilities who did not meet standards on unit assessments would receive targeted instruction on their deficits. This work was documented and analyzed, and instructional needs were immediately addressed. Results following these instructional and monitoring changes showed that grade 5 math students with disabilities went from a passage rate of 62% in 2010-11 to 94% in 2011-2012 and that grade 6 math students with disabilities went from a passage rate of 70% in 2010-11 to 90% in 2011-2012.

## **2. Using Assessment Results:**

Orchard Middle School uses a variety of formative and summative assessment data daily to drive instruction and improve student and school performance. Before the start of the school year, teachers utilize the district-constructed, web-based, student information system. This system allows teachers to access summative data about individual student performance in the areas of reading, writing, developmental spelling, math, science and social studies. Additionally, the principal shares hard copies of standardized test data, such as state achievement results, with teachers. The teachers use this information to plan instruction for individual student needs.

Within the first month of a new school year, teachers utilize diagnostic tools to assess all children in the areas of reading, writing and spelling to determine the best instructional placement for students within differentiated learning groups. Daily, teachers provide specific, immediate feedback to students in content areas (assessment “for” learning versus assessment “of” learning) to ensure understanding and to improve academic performance. For example, within the math program, assessments “for” learning are embedded throughout each unit. This allows the teacher to use that data to intervene or accelerate student learning in real time as needed throughout the unit, rather than waiting until the end of the unit.

Teachers within all areas of the core curriculum have designed and implemented common assessments or end-of-unit assessments that are aligned to the state standards. The results of these assessments are analyzed by teachers, teacher leaders and administrators during scheduled collaboration times (PLC meetings). Results are aggregated into a database and analyzed by class, by standard, by item and overall student performance. The data is also disaggregated by subgroup to assess the levels of performance for each group. These assessments allow teams of professionals to collaborate and co-plan instruction that is designed to give second doses of instruction or concept extension tasks to those students who demonstrate the need. Co-planning on how to teach concepts differently when students do not achieve is a valuable exercise that has yielded significant results for our students.

Teachers work in collaborative learning communities throughout the school year with a strategic focus on student results. They collaborate and have meaningful discussions about what student assessments show

and then use that student-specific information to strategically plan and change their instructional practices to achieve better student learning results. This job-embedded collaboration takes on different forms in different schools. At Orchard Middle School, there are content area (cluster) meetings during which collaborative planning, common assessment development, student work analysis, assessment results analysis, and specific professional development designed to address weaknesses in the school program occurs.

As a result of the job-embedded collaborative processes, a systematic process of interventions is activated to ensure students receive additional time and support for learning when they experience difficulty. Specific instructional goals and strategies are developed for each student with the goal of closing any achievement gaps present. Progress is monitored at each subsequent quarterly meeting. A collaborative framework through which staff can identify effective solutions for students who may need interventions of some kind to bolster their mastery of academic content is based on assessment results and the ongoing monitoring of student progress. Within this framework, parents come to understand the needs of their child and their progress by participating in the system through meetings with teachers and executing complementary interventions at home that support the school's intervention efforts.

Parents are required sign and return all copies of assessments (formative and summative). Summative common assessments or end-of-unit assessments are also accompanied with a standards-based cover sheet that summarizes for parents how their child performed on each standard assessed. Parents can easily see which concepts were strong and which concepts were weak in their child's performance. This format provides detailed information to parents about their child and tells them which areas may need additional support or extension at home. Further, students are provided the opportunity to view these cover sheets and reflect on their own learning and performance. Student reflection is a powerful tool. Sometimes, this reflection is performed with a whole-class technique. In other instances, prior to sharing the results with a child, teachers will interview students with a blank copy of the test in an attempt to understand the child's thought-process more deeply so that meaningful feedback and corrective instruction can be provided. Knowing if the student error is a conceptual error, related to a gap in test-taking skill, or just a careless error is important in designing appropriate corrective instruction and providing actionable feedback to the student.

### **3. Sharing Lessons Learned:**

Orchard Middle School's professional learning community has eagerly embraced the infusion of accountability and public reporting of assessment results into education. The staff believes strongly that as educators they have the responsibility to share educational best practices with all colleagues to fully meet the vision of "every student, every day," as well as to learn more as educators to better ensure all students are meeting standards and achieving their potential.

The philosophy of the Solon City Schools is that individual teachers do not bear sole responsibility for student success; instead all professionals have a collective responsibility to ensure that each and every student meets his or her academic goals. With that in mind, the administrators have worked hard over the past few years to maximize teachers' schedules, planning times and after-school meeting times. These times are now viewed as collaboration times with a focused purpose on improving student achievement. The success of the current schedule, which increased teacher time for collaboration without shortening the school day for students through late starts or early dismissals, has been shared with other school districts throughout Ohio upon request.

Additionally, our administrators and leadership team members have participated in "summits" with other similar districts across Ohio to share best practices and success stories. These collaborative meetings between school leadership teams from across Ohio have served us well. Many times, they have resulted in requests for visitations to our school from other districts. Over the past five years, we have hosted countless teams from other districts that wish to observe our best practices in literacy instruction, math instruction, Response to Intervention, and special education. Most recently, effective changes in

scheduling and the implementation of intervention systems have been shared with other districts. Additionally, Orchard administrators and teachers have presented best practices to colleagues at national, state and local conferences, including the National Schools to Watch Conference in Washington, D.C., and best practices workshops sponsored by Battelle for Kids.

#### **4. Engaging Families and Communities:**

Orchard Middle School places great value on partnerships with parents and organizations within the community at-large. We believe that engaged parents are necessary to the success of each child. For example, when providing intervention to students who require more time and support, teachers and administrators meet monthly with parents and the child to check progress, collaboratively set goals, and determine specific actions that the teacher, parent, and student will undertake to ensure intervention goals are met. Parent participation in our system of intervention is expected and necessary to ensure student success.

Additionally, we have an active parent volunteer program. Parents volunteer their time to work with students in one-on-one situations to support mastery of the curriculum. Parents and community members are also encouraged to make connections with classroom teachers in order to work with groups of students for the purposes of editing writing pieces and conducting individual reading conferences during independent reading. Further, we hire parents from the community to serve as lunch and recess monitors and activity facilitators. As part of our overall wellness program for students, these active parents and employees are trained to facilitate active movement on the playground and to appropriately interact with students to resolve conflict. Hiring parents from our community increases their “stake” in our school and assists in having informed parents within the larger community about school issues.

The Orchard Middle School PTA is very active in supporting school goals as well. We are proud that our membership enrollments in PTA have increased over the years. We utilize committees of parents to assist in planning and operating student-based activities, as well as school-wide rewards programs for positive behavior and academic performance. Facebook is used to engage parents via social media and to provide a forum for two-way communication. Additionally, we forge partnerships with various local businesses and successfully solicit donations to fund student programs or items to be used as student incentives. Members of the Solon Chamber of Commerce regularly support our school in this way. We also partner with the Solon Benevolent Fund to assist needy families with the cost of field trips, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Outdoor Education Camp, and other important fee-based activities for students. We are the Benevolent Fund’s largest partner.

Orchard Middle School reflects the goals of No Child Left Behind through its relentless focus on success for all students, and our partnerships and relationships with parents, businesses and the community at-large are an important part of our mission.

## **PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Curriculum:**

The curriculum at Orchard Middle School and the Solon City Schools is aligned with all of Ohio's Academic Content Standards, including the core curricular areas of English/language arts, math, science and social studies. Teachers from Orchard Middle School collaboratively plan to ensure that the core curriculum is aligned with the state standards as soon as they are adopted or updated by the state of Ohio.

In language arts, our curriculum focuses on comprehensive literacy. Using a research-based reading and writing workshop model, Orchard Middle School students participate in several types of reading instruction: large group, small group guided reading led by the teacher and independent reading. Students acquire a vast vocabulary and become independent readers and effective communicators who can make sense of written language in this language-rich structure. Additionally, students are provided with a curriculum that is differentiated and personalized.

Math at Orchard Middle School requires students to develop the conceptual understanding of mathematical processes. The math curriculum is aligned with Ohio Academic Content Standards and with the standards set by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Math teachers at Orchard Middle School use diagnostic tools, such as Advantage Math, which test students' thinking about math concepts, identify the gaps in their thinking, and provide the teachers with strategies to close those gaps. Math students at Orchard benefit from rich collaborative learning and idea sharing, deep problem-solving and reasoning, and the application and analyzing of the concepts they are studying. By working in small groups using manipulatives and other math tools, as well as communicating their mathematical thinking with one another, students are better able to connect math concepts with real-life experiences and other areas of study, a critical skill for using math throughout their lifetime.

Curriculum for science and social studies engages our students in collaboration, exploration and problem solving. In science, students engage in hands-on, inquiry-based activities that provide them with opportunities to work together and wrestle with science problems. They develop and test hypotheses, analyze data, draw conclusions and write about their findings. In social studies, students gain content knowledge and skills to learn history in a real-world context. Students make connections from what they read and learn and compare and contrast to their own experiences, both locally and globally. Using MAX teaching strategies, such as two-column notes, preview strategies and anticipation guides, teachers help students to analyze, interact with, and comprehend the social studies text.

All students at Orchard participate regularly in music, physical education and visual arts. Instruction is completed daily by certified physical education, music or art teachers and the curriculum is aligned to the Ohio Standards. Each student has the opportunity to explore vocal or instrumental music education. Students may choose to participate in fifth or sixth grade choir, and in fifth grade, students may choose to learn to play an instrument and participate in the band. Many students may choose to play a string instrument and participate in the orchestra. Students receive small group lessons if they choose to play a string or band instrument. Depending on students' needs, they may choose to participate in a combination of choir and band, choir and strings, strings and band or a combination of all three areas.

Technology is integrated within all of the core subject areas. Orchard Middle School has a computer lab as well as five computers in each classroom to meet district-adopted technology competencies and state standards at each grade level.

### **2. Reading/English:**

Understanding the critical importance of literacy, particularly reading, the Solon Schools implemented a comprehensive literacy approach for all kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms, relying heavily on small group guided instruction during the literacy block. Guided by the philosophy of making the classroom teacher the first line of intervention, all children receive differentiated instruction in reading, writing and developmental spelling to meet the unique needs of Orchard Middle School's diverse student population. The published research on reading instruction compelled staff to transform its practice from a "one-size-fits-all" approach to a more differentiated and diagnostic approach to reading in which the best teaching is based on assessment of student strengths and weaknesses. To identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual students as well as to identify appropriate text levels and instructional needs, teachers implement classroom-based formative assessment by using individually administered assessments that assess fluency, processing and decoding, strategy use and comprehension. Using all components of comprehensive literacy – read aloud, shared reading, guided reading and independent reading – teachers design instruction based on student needs in relation to Ohio English/Language Arts Content Standards. Teachers meet individual student needs by conducting student conferences and small group guided reading.

For the majority of students, the classroom teacher provides any needed intervention – he or she diagnostically determines the strengths and weaknesses and then appropriately selects reading materials and research-based strategies to instruct in small, guided reading groups, resulting in increased student learning. For those who are struggling, the classroom teacher meets with a literacy coach and together, the teacher and coach analyze the data to determine the root cause and create an action plan to help the student close any achievement gaps. The teacher and coach meet monthly to analyze the students' data and to determine the next steps.

### **3. Mathematics:**

Math at Orchard Middle School requires students to develop the conceptual understanding of mathematical processes. We believe that mathematics is best learned in an environment that encourages students to share and communicate their thinking so that they may learn from one another and deepen their understanding. Students often work with a partner or in groups. They know that their teachers routinely ask them to solve a problem using more than one strategy. Developing a math classroom culture has helped children feel comfortable sharing their solutions and focus on learning from each other as well as their teacher.

Our math lessons are aligned to the Ohio Academic Content Standards. Our lessons are collaboratively planned and involve many hands-on, concrete lessons that help provide the scaffold to learning new concepts. Our classrooms are stocked with a variety of math manipulatives and students have easy access to these hands-on tools. Learning math with such materials helps all students develop deep, conceptual understanding that scaffolds them to abstract learning at their own pace. Students receive 80 minutes of math instruction each day. This includes 20 minutes for additional practice, problem solving and extension. The other 60 minutes are used for teacher-directed lessons, which consist of whole group, small group, partner and individual work each and every day.

The strength of the school math curriculum is the continual emphasis on students viewing themselves as mathematicians and understanding that math exists all around them in their daily lives. Throughout the lesson, the teacher relates the learning target to real-life examples. In addition, students spend time communicating their thoughts and answers to their peers and discussing alternate ways to solve the problems they are considering.

Our math teachers check on learning each day. They use this data to adjust their plans to assist every child in reaching the grade level standards and extending those who have met the standards. Those students who need additional time to help reach the grade level standards, may receive additional help and support from the classroom teacher or intervention during our activity period at the end of the day.

#### **4. Additional Curriculum Area:**

In addition to our math, literacy, social studies and science curriculum, we offer an extensive music curriculum consisting of both instrumental and vocal music. All students at Orchard Middle School take 80 minutes of vocal music each week. Orchard Middle School students have the opportunity to participate in fifth and sixth grade choir. More than 200 students in each grade level participate in this elective. Students in choir perform two concerts during the school year. In addition, students who are members of choir may try out for Orchard's selective ensemble. Those who are selected for ensemble, practice before school three mornings a week and perform in many concerts throughout the year. The Orchard ensemble is honored to perform the national anthem at a Cleveland Indians' baseball game at Progressive Field each spring.

Students in fifth and sixth grade may also choose to learn a band instrument and participate in our fifth or sixth grade band. Each fall, introductions to all of the instruments are made by our music teachers to the students. Based on their interest, students select an instrument and then participate in small group lessons throughout the week. During our activity period, band members meet and practice together. The band performs many instrumental concerts throughout the year, including a community outdoor concert and ice cream social event that is held each spring.

Many students in fifth and sixth grade may choose to participate in our strings program. After starting instruction in the fourth grade, our Orchard students may choose to continue playing the cello, bass and viola. Students receive small group lessons throughout the week and perform in many concerts throughout our school year. Students are taught to read music and how to care and play their instruments properly.

Depending on the students' needs and interest, they may choose to participate in a combination of choir and band, choir and strings, strings and band or a combination of all three areas. We believe the music program at Orchard Middle School is a key educational component to developing well-rounded students.

#### **5. Instructional Methods:**

At Orchard Middle School, our motto is "every student, every day." It is our goal and responsibility to help each student reach his or her potential. We go to great lengths instructionally to achieve that goal. We believe that all students can and will learn when given the right learning environment. We are committed to providing students not only with the right environment but also the right instruction.

To ensure that all students meet high academic standards, teachers have identified the power indicators or essential understandings that students must master in each unit of study. Teachers deconstruct the standards and collaboratively create student-friendly learning targets. These targets guide instruction and are directly aligned to the common assessments that students take at the end of each unit. These learning targets are provided to the students at the beginning of the unit and provide students the opportunity to self-assess their own learning before, during and after instruction. During each lesson, teachers share the learning targets and the success criteria in a variety of ways.

The teachers use a variety of formative instruction practices throughout instruction. Teachers check daily on student learning by using assessment for learning strategies. These include, but are not limited to, exit slips, response journals, think-pair-share activities and other formats that demonstrate students' levels of understanding. Information gathered from the formative assessments helps teachers determine which students need additional assistance with learning or which need extension; how well they have provided instructions; and the next instructional steps for all students. From these assessments, students are able to reflect on their learning and use the teacher's timely and descriptive feedback to correct misunderstandings or further their learning.

Orchard Middle School staff differentiates curriculum instruction to meet the diverse needs of all learners. Teachers differentiate instruction in the areas of reading, writing and word study through a comprehensive literacy approach. Diagnostic assessment data is collected on every student at Orchard Middle School at the beginning of the year in language arts. In math, data is collected throughout the year to ensure that students are achieving their personal best and instructional methods are then tailored to meet the needs of each child in the classroom during the 80-minute math block.

Consistent, daily collaboration occurs between regular education teachers and support (special education and gifted education) teachers to ensure that all students are being challenged to reach their full potential.

## **6. Professional Development:**

The Solon City Schools and Orchard Middle School consider professional development a critical component of ensuring student success. To underscore this importance, the district has made considerable investments of time and resources to further the education of staff members through professional development. The return on this investment significantly impacts the bottom line of student achievement and the Orchard Middle School staff embraces the research findings that demonstrate improvements in student learning can only occur in the presence of continual, job-embedded teacher learning.

To ensure that each student achieves at high levels, Solon teachers use a structure known as the Professional Learning Community, which requires collaboratively developed and widely shared mission, vision, values and goals. This structure promotes shared responsibility and accountability. Teachers no longer work in isolation. Using their own professional expertise, they are purposefully and actively engaged in collaborative and reflective dialogue with other colleagues to determine best practices designed to ensure that all students learn. All teachers, whether brand new or veteran, have the opportunity to observe instructional practices performed by Solon colleagues throughout the school year to improve best first instruction and student achievement.

Orchard Middle School teachers play an active role in their professional learning communities. In those PLCs, teachers are continually working together with a very purposeful focus on student work. Teachers meet weekly with their content area teams to plan instruction, develop common assessments, analyze student work, analyze assessment data and develop a strategic plan to address weaknesses in student learning or teacher instruction. We support one another by sharing strategies and materials to improve student learning and to accomplish goals that would be impossible if we were working alone. To improve learning for all, we learn from each other and focus on results. Our conversations and actions are guided by four basic questions: What do we want students to know? How will we know they have mastered the skills and content we want them to learn? What will we do when they don't learn? What will we do when students are achieving and need additional challenges?

## **7. School Leadership:**

Orchard Middle School's Leadership Team embraces the philosophy of meeting the needs of every child each and every day. The leadership team includes the principal, assistant principal, school psychologist, pyramid and guidance coordinator, literacy teacher leader, math teacher leader and content area teacher leader. To create the Professional Learning Community and safe environment we seek, Orchard Middle School's vision comes to life over the summer. The leadership team meets in August to review our prior-year data and set a yearly goal to increase student achievement. The action plans for these goals are collaboratively created with the teachers and monitored monthly throughout the school year.

The leadership team meets twice a month to analyze data and support one another with the goal of achieving the stated student achievement goals. We discuss individual student, staff and parent issues, review current instructional practices, participate in our own professional learning and create action plans on how to coach and support all Orchard Middle School teachers in their learning and work with students.



In addition, the leadership team members further their own professional learning, explore current research-based, best educational practices, and develop plans to put these practices into action.

Monthly, a small subset of the school leadership team meets with the classroom teachers to monitor students that are not meeting grade-level standards in reading and math. Together with the classroom teacher and the interventionist, the school leadership team works collaboratively to create action plans that will help ensure the student will make gap-closing progress in order to meet grade-level standards.

To create a system of accountability for student achievement, Orchard Middle School administrators engage in many observations, including both formal and informal classroom walk-throughs and gauging to what extent best practices are implemented and expected results are evident.

## PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

### STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 5 Test: Ohio Achievement Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: 2011-12 Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient and Above	96	86	90	87	86
Accelerated and Above	82	64	68	65	66
Number of students tested	365	386	377	427	368
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	7	4	10	5
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	1	2	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	94	62	80	72	50
Accelerated and Above	56	38	34	38	38
Number of students tested	36	34	35	32	16
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	86	48	72	62	52
Accelerated and Above	47	17	30	30	24
Number of students tested	55	54	46	36	46
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	0	0	0	0	0
Accelerated and Above	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	92	46	69	67	58
Accelerated and Above	58	24	33	38	24
Number of students tested	24	37	39	42	33
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	93	91	79	0	74
Accelerated and Above	86	78	50	0	53
Number of students tested	28	23	14		19
<b>6. Asian</b>					
Proficient and Above	100	99	100	98	95
Accelerated and Above	98	93	90	95	88
Number of students tested	45	71	39	60	41
<b>NOTES:</b>					

13OH11

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 5 Test: Ohio Achievement Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: 2011-12 Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient and Above	94	93	89	92	91
Accelerated and Above	54	49	40	50	45
Number of students tested	365	386	377	427	368
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	7	4	10	5
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	1	2	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	86	77	83	72	56
Accelerated and Above	14	27	17	22	25
Number of students tested	36	34	35	32	16
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	87	82	70	76	65
Accelerated and Above	26	15	13	24	9
Number of students tested	55	54	46	63	46
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	0	0	0	0	0
Accelerated and Above	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	79	73	67	67	58
Accelerated and Above	29	19	8	24	18
Number of students tested	24	37	39	42	33
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	86	100	86	0	84
Accelerated and Above	54	39	14	0	37
Number of students tested	28	23	14		19
<b>6. Asian</b>					
Proficient and Above	98	99	100	98	98
Accelerated and Above	80	76	64	72	68
Number of students tested	45	71	39	60	41
<b>NOTES:</b>					

13OH11

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 6 Test: Ohio Achievement Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: 2011-12 Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient and Above	99	95	98	95	95
Accelerated and Above	87	79	86	83	85
Number of students tested	404	378	429	377	391
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	8	4	10	4	5
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	1	2	1	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	96	81	94	77	76
Accelerated and Above	63	49	65	50	64
Number of students tested	48	41	31	26	25
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	93	81	90	80	84
Accelerated and Above	61	52	60	49	64
Number of students tested	56	48	60	49	70
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	0	0	0	0	0
Accelerated and Above	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	90	70	87	81	72
Accelerated and Above	45	41	64	52	41
Number of students tested	38	37	39	31	39
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	100	92	0	77	0
Accelerated and Above	96	58	0	59	0
Number of students tested	27	12		17	
<b>6. Asian</b>					
Proficient and Above	100	98	100	96	100
Accelerated and Above	96	93	97	91	98
Number of students tested	74	40	60	44	41
<b>NOTES:</b>					

# STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 6 Test: Ohio Achievement Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: 2011-12 Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient and Above	100	97	99	96	95
Accelerated and Above	78	72	73	70	70
Number of students tested	404	378	429	377	391
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	8	3	10	4	5
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	1	2	1	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	100	85	94	81	84
Accelerated and Above	46	42	45	31	48
Number of students tested	48	41	31	26	25
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	100	88	95	88	89
Accelerated and Above	45	44	53	27	43
Number of students tested	56	48	60	49	70
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	0	0	0	0	0
Accelerated and Above	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	97	95	90	77	64
Accelerated and Above	50	32	31	23	18
Number of students tested	38	37	39	31	39
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient and Above	100	100	0	82	0
Accelerated and Above	85	58	0	41	0
Number of students tested	27	12		17	
<b>6. Asian</b>					
Proficient and Above	100	100	98	96	100
Accelerated and Above	91	98	87	84	88
Number of students tested	74	40	60	44	41
<b>NOTES:</b>					